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WORDS, MEANINGS, CONTEXTS, A UNIT ON SEMANTICS. GENERALLY SPEAKING, A UNIT ON GENERALIZATION. FLIGHT OF FANCY, A UNIT ON IMAGINED POINT OF VIEW. RHETORIC CURRICULUM III, STUDENT VERSION.

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STUDIES OF SEMANTICS, FORMATION OF GENERALIZATIONS, AND POINTS OF VIEW WERE COMBINED IN THIS THREE-PART STUDY GUIDE FOR NINTH-GRADERS TO PROVIDE A SOUND UNDERSTANDING OF RHETORIC. IN THE FIRST PART, EXERCISES WHICH PLACED WORDS IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS WERE USED TO SHOW THE RANGE OF MEANINGS POSSIBLE FOR SINGLE WORDS. THE SECOND PART OUTLINED EXERCISES INTENDED TO HELP STUDENTS RELATE STATED FACTS TO MORE GENERAL AND INCLUSIVE STATEMENTS AND TO PROVIDE A LOGICAL BASIS FOR FORMING GENERALIZATIONS AND QUALIFICATIONS AS WELL AS ESTABLISHING SUPPORT FOR THEM. THE THIRD PART PRESENTED ASSIGNMENTS DESIGNED TO ACQUAINT THE STUDENT WITH IMAGINED POINTS OF VIEW, HUMAN AND NONHUMAN. SUCH POINTS OF VIEW WERE ILLUSTRATED THROUGH EXAMPLES OF BOTH POETRY AND PROSE. THE TEACHER'S GUIDE IS ED 010 806. RELATED REPORTS ARE ED 010 129 THROUGH ED 010 160 AND ED 010 803 THROUGH ED 010 832. (FM)

OREGON CURRICULUM STUDY CENTER

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WORDS, MEANINGS, CONTEXTS,
(A Unit on Semantics).

GENERALLY SPEAKING,
(A Unit on Generalization).

FLIGHT OF FANCY,
(A Unit on Imagined Point of View).

Rhetoric Curriculum III,
Student Version.

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OREGON CURRICULUM STUDY CENTER

WORDS, MEANINGS, CONTEXTS

(A Unit on Semantics)

Rhetoric Curriculum III

Student Version

I

"Crazy."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean what I said, crazy."

If you had asked the question in that conversation, you wouldn't have been much wiser after you got the answer than you were before. The person who said "Crazy" seems to think that a word has a meaning and that everyone should know it, and if you don't know the meaning of the word crazy you are dumb or something.

So he thinks you are dumb. But you still don't know what he meant by the word crazy, though by now you may be getting a little mad because you are beginning to think that he means you are crazy.

Don't get mad; that possibly isn't what he meant at all. But there is no way for you to know what he did mean. So don't feel that you are dumb; no one in the same circumstances could have known what he meant. It is not true that every word has a single meaning attached to it which we learn when we learn the word. If the word crazy did have a single meaning attached to it, we would probably know the meaning, and we would have understood what your friend meant.

The idea that a word doesn't have a single meaning attached to it, in the same way that a body has a single head attached to it, may be new to you, and you probably need more convincing. Here is another example:

Energy

There is a word for you. Now, what does that word mean? Go ahead and guess, but, as Mark Twain once said, ". . . it would take you thirty years to guess, and even then you would have to give it up, I believe. Therefore I will tell you. . . ." But instead of being told directly what the word means, read part of a TV commercial in which the word is used:

> Try Energy! When you pour these crisp, golden, delicious flakes blended from wheat, corn, oats, rice, and safflower seeds into your bowl and top them with fruit, milk, and sugar, you will say, "Man! Energy is a real breakfast!"

Now it is obvious that Energy is the name of a new breakfast cereal.

The example is a little far-fetched, but it makes the point: When the word Energy stood alone on the page, you could not know what was meant by it, but when you read it in the TV commercial you had a pretty good idea of what it meant. This point leads us to several general rules about how we understand the meanings of words:

(1) No word has a single meaning permanently attached to it.
(2) No word has a particular meaning until somebody uses it.
(3) The most important thing about understanding the meaning of a word is to understand what a particular person means by the word when he uses it at a particular time.
(4) We interpret the meaning of a word from its surroundings or <u>context</u>.

How, then, do we understand what a person means by a word? The answer is both very simple and very complicated: We use our wits and we investigate the context in which the word was used. And, to turn the situation around, when we are writing or speaking we can't stop to tell people what we mean by every word we use; we would have to use other words to tell them what we meant, and then we would have to tell them what we meant by those words. We would be on a treadmill and losing ground fast. So, if we are writing we create a context that will make the meaning of the word clear, and if we are reading we use our wits and investigate the context in which the word was used.

The reason, then, that we didn't understand our friend when he used the word <u>crazy</u> was that we didn't have a context to investigate. Let's put the word into a context and see what difference that makes.

> Our friend Joe has a backboard and a basket fastened to a garage wall in his backyard. One afternoon we were shooting baskets with Joe. A rebound bounced away, and Joe's dog jumped on the ball. He is a big dog, and it looked for a minute like he might get his teeth into the ball.
>
> Joe ran after him and yelled, "Here, Crazy! Here, Crazy! Come on, boy, leave that ball alone. Atta boy, Crazy, you're a good dog."

Presto! as the magician says. <u>Crazy</u> is the name of Joe's dog. Simple. But not so simple. Let us see how we found out that <u>Crazy</u> is the name of Joe's dog.

EXERCISE I

1. Before you had read the word <u>crazy</u> in a context, could you have guessed that it was the name of Joe's dog?
2. Is there a sentence or a group of sentences in the context that defines <u>Crazy</u>, that tells you what the word means?
3. If any of the sentences in these paragraphs had been omitted, could you still tell what the word <u>Crazy</u> means? Which sentences are most important to understanding the meaning of <u>crazy</u>?
4. Can you think of other times when you have figured out the meaning of a word from the context? Think particularly of times when you were in places or situations in which you had never been before and you heard words you had never heard before. Discuss with the class how you were able to use clues from the context to determine the meaning of the new word.

5. Discuss the statement, "No word has a particular meaning until somebody uses it."

II

Before we go farther we need to look more closely at the word context, as we have been using it and as it will be used later in these lessons. From the contexts in which the word has been used, you have certainly gotten at least a vague idea of what was meant by it. Look back at the word as it has been used and discuss with the other students in your class what you think it means.

Look the word up in your dictionary. Does the meaning of the word as it is used in this unit seem to be similar to one of the meanings that is given in the dictionary? Does what you find in the dictionary tell you that the word is used in this unit in a peculiar and unusual way (like the use of energy and crazy)? Or does it tell you that the word is used in a way that is similar to the ways other people have used it--similar enough so that the editors have included a close approximation of this meaning in the dictionary? Why did you not find definitions of crazy and energy in your dictionary which matched the meanings in this unit?

You probably decided that the word context has been used in this unit to refer to the surroundings of a word, the environment in which we find it or in which we use it.

In the rest of the unit the word context will be used in three ways: to refer to the whole environment, or context, in which the word is found, and also to refer to two different parts of that environment.

The first part of the environment the word context will be used to refer to is the physical surroundings in which the word is used: Who said it? Where? When? Under what circumstances? Take, for example, the following word:

fire

What does the word fire mean in the following physical circumstances?

1. It is spoken by a woman who is running out of a house that is smoking at the windows.
2. It is spoken by an army sergeant who is standing beside a firing squad.
3. The vice-president of a large corporation is talking to the president. He asks him, "When the market for our product is unstable, what should we do? Hire or fire?" The president answers, "Fire." (Would the word, as it appears in the answer, have a slightly different meaning if it were the president who had asked the question and the vice-president who answered it?)

EXERCISE II

1. Think of an ordinary, everyday word.
2. Think of two sets of physical circumstances in which the word will have two different meanings. You may vary the person who uses the word or vary the circumstances or both. You might, for instance, use a word that has a different meaning when it is used by adults from when it is used by teenagers.
3. Write a short narrative about each set of circumstances. In each narrative use the word you thought of. The idea is to write each narrative in such a way that the meaning of the word will be clear to the reader, although you do not give a definition of the word.
4. Discuss with the class whether the meaning of the word in each narrative is clear and how its meaning could be made clearer.

The second part of the surroundings or context of a word that the word context will refer to in this unit is the other words that surround the word in question. This verbal context has many complex effects on the meaning of a word, just as the physical context does. In fact, the effects of the verbal context on the meaning of a word are so complicated and varied that we will only be able to begin to explore them in this unit. Nevertheless, whether we are conscious of what we are doing or not, we must always take their effects into account if we are to understand what somebody means by a word.

EXERCISE III

1. Look carefully at the following pairs of contexts and discuss with the class how the verbal context affects the meanings of the underlined words.

(a) "I bought a new dress yesterday."

"My father said that since I had shot the deer I would have to dress him out."

(b) "It simply wasn't his nature to get angry, no matter what happened."

"The nature of matter is an unsolved mystery of nature."

(c) "This side of the card is white, but the other side is black."

"The coach said that our prospects for this year are bright but for next year they are black."

(d) "Bill seems to be a friend of mine, but Joe is."

"Bill was a friend of mine, but Joe is."

(e) "My new dress is green."

"When Mary saw my new dress, she wasn't jealous, she was green."

(f) "How many cowards, whose hearts are all as false
As stairs of sand, yet wear upon their chins
The beards of Hercules and frowning Mars;
Who, inward searched, have livers white as milk!"
The Merchant of Venice, Act III, Scene 2.

"My sister bought a false hair-piece."

(g) Bassanio. Opening a leaden casket and finding a picture of Portia
"What find I here?
Fair Portia's counterfeit! What demigod
Hath come so near creation?"
The Merchant of Venice, Act III, Scene 2.

"The creation of counterfeit bills is against the law."

2. See how many verbal contexts you can create, each of which reveals a different meaning for the following words: black, shoe, swing, nature, way, sale.

III

Most of the time we are able to investigate the context and figure out the meaning of a word very quickly--so quickly, in fact, that we don't even realize that we had thought about it. But a lot of training and knowledge lies behind our ability to interpret a word so quickly. And when we happen on a word that gives us difficulty, we have to stop and look at the context and do some careful thinking about what the word might mean in that context. Let us see if we can find out something about how we can investigate the context and come up with the meaning of the word.

Read Josephine Miles's poem, "Sale."

(For text of poem, see Poems--1930-1960 by Josephine Miles; Indiana University Press, 1960; p. 78.)

Now, how do we find out what Miss Miles means by the word sale in her title? Probably we do very much the same sort of thing as we did when w discovered the meaning of crazy and energy, but then the meaning the writer intended popped into our minds so fast that we probably didn't even notice how we decided. And even the most learned psychologists would be hard put to it to give us a very satisfactory explanation of what happened in our minds. But that doesn't mean that we have to throw up our hands and call it magic; and we shouldn't, because if we can find out something about how we decided on the meaning of crazy or energy, we can use the same method to discover the meanings of words we don't understand.

One of the things we probably do is to think of other contexts in which we have heard, read, or used the same word, if we have heard the word before. For instance, here are some familiar sentence patterns in which the word sale is used. Think them over, compare them to what is said in the poem, and see if you can decide which are similar to the use of sale in the poem and which are not.

EXERCISE IV

1. These shoes are for sale.
2. I don't want to miss the sale at Macy's.
3. Water skiing is fun, but I would rather sail.
4. You can't be shy if you are going to be a successful salesman.
5. He is the kind of businessman who would do anything to make a sale.
6. I don't think that kind of shoe would be saleable.
7. Salemanship is important to the success of any retail business.
8. In the sale of a piece of machinery as big as this one you have to figure the shipping costs very carefully.
9. If you want to make change, ring up "No Sale" on the cash register.
10. Now you can buy these popular shoes at sale prices.
11. When Jerry asked Martha for a date she said, "No sale."

On a separate sheet of paper arrange the numbers of these sentences according to how similar the meaning of the word sale is to its meaning in the title of the poem. Begin with the sentence in which the meaning of sale is closest to its meaning in the title of the poem. End with the sentence in which the meaning of sale is farthest from its meaning in the poem. Then, discuss why you arranged the sentences the way you did.

Would you say that the word sale in one or more of these sentences has the same meaning as the word sale in the title of the poem? Are the meanings of these words exactly the same, or can you notice slight differences in meaning?

If you were writing a dictionary, how many definitions would you include for the word sale? Defend your choice.

Check your dictionary to discover how many definitions of sale are included. Can all of the meanings of sale we have discovered be fitted into these definitions? Does a larger dictionary include more meanings of sale? Why?

EXERCISE V

Lewis Carroll's nonsense verse is often given as an example to illustrate how much meaning we are able to deduce from a verbal context even though "meaningless" words are used. Here is part of Carroll's poem "Jabberwocky." See how much meaning you can ascribe to the "nonsense" words, and discuss how the verbal context helps you to decide on the meanings of these words. Does your knowledge of grammar help you? Do the sounds and shapes of the nonsense words give you any clues? Do you find some clues that can't be accounted for either by grammar or by sound and shape? (You will find the entire poem in Immortal Poems of the English Language.)

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
  Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
  And the mome raths outgrabe.

Answering the following questions should help you to understand why we are able to find some meaning even in Carroll's nonsense words.

1. Which of the two underlined words would be a more likely substitute for the word slithy in the first line?

(a) This is a very slippery snail.

(b) My brother has a collection of color slides.

2. Which of the two underlined words would be a more likely substitute for outgrabe in the fourth line?

(a) Because Bill refused to cheat when the rest of the class did, he is an outcast.

(b) When the bell rang for the football rally, the girls walked to the stadium and the boys ran.

3. Which of the two underlined words would be a more likely substitute for slithy in the first line?

(a) I don't like to touch snakes because they are so slithery.

(b) The glistening groves of aspen swayed in the wind.

4. How does the context suggest meanings for words like gyre, gimble, and mome?

IV

Let us now turn to the actual problems of interpreting meaning that face us when we read. Shakespeare uses the word nature only five times in The Merchant of Venice, but each time it is used the word has a new meaning. Consequently, we cannot unravel the meanings of the word if we come armed with only a single definition and naively expect that definition to explain the meanings of the word. We must use our wits, and we must look carefully at the context each time the word is used; then we must carefully attempt to unravel the meaning Shakespeare intended, so far as our inadequate knowledge of Shakespeare's world and language will enable us to understand.

You will find the word nature in (1) Act I, Scene 1, Line 54; (2) Act II, Scene 9, Line 64; (3) Act III, Scene 2, Line 92; (4) Act IV, Scene 1, Line 180; (5) Act V, Scene 1, Line 90. Let us look at each context and see how much we can discover about what the word means.

Act I, Scene 1, Line 54.

1. Should we expect the word nature to have somewhat different meanings in Shakespeare's time from the meanings it has today? What changes have taken place in the world that would account for these differences?

2. Should we also expect to find similarities between the meanings of the word in Shakespeare's times and the meanings we encounter today? What is still the same about the world that would account for these similarities?

3. According to this context in Act I, Scene 1, what does nature do?

4. Is nature immortal in this context? What does the phrase "in her time" tell us about this?

5. Is nature the same thing as God? Does nature seem to be related to God?

6. What do you think the lifetime of nature is?

7. Are the acts of nature always rational and sensible, or are they sometimes perverse and odd? Can men always understand why nature does what she does

8. Is Solanio joking with Antonio or is he serious? Does this have an effect on what he means by the word nature?

Act II, Scene 9, Line 64.

1. How is the meaning of the word nature, as Portia uses it here, simila to the meaning of nature in the following sentences? How is it different?

(a) Even I know enough about the nature of a gas to know that it will disperse in air.
(b) I don't believe that Joe lied. It's not in his nature to lie.
(c) Joe is very good natured.

2. What do you think Portia means by opposed?

3. What is Portia telling us about offending and judging when she says th are of "opposed natures"? How are offending and judging actually different?

4. Can an offender and a judge be the same person? Would our sense of justice be violated if a judge did judge his own crimes?

5. What is meant by "sense of justice" in the last question? Where do w get our sense of justice?

Act III, Scene 2, Line 92.

1. How is the meaning of nature in this context different from the meanin Solanio intended in Act I? How is it similar?

2. According to this context, what is a miracle?

3. According to Bassanio's sense of the word nature, are the rules of nature ordinarily rational?

4. How is Bassanio's meaning of nature different from Portia's meaning in Act II? How is it similar?

Act IV, Scene 1, Line 180.

1. How similar is the meaning of the word as it is used here to its meaning in Act II?

2. Specifically, what is strange about the nature of Shylock's suit? What would be a normal suit, as opposed to a strange suit?

3. Does the nature of Skylock's suit offend our sense of justice? Strictly and legally speaking, is the nature of Shylock's suit offensive to justice? Can there be a difference between what the law says is just and what our sense of justice tells us is just?

Act V. Scene 1, Line 90.

1. Does nature in this context refer to the permanent and unchangeable disposition or character of a person?

2. How does the meaning of the word in this context differ from its meaning in the sentence, "It is impossible for Joe to lie because it is not in his nature."

3. Is it in the nature of trees and stones to move around?

4. Does this context suggest that the effect of music is magical or miraculous? Compare the word in this context with its use in Act III.

These exercises have probably convinced you that nature as Shakespeare used it is a very difficult word. They should also have convinced you that if we think that every word has a single meaning attached to it, we will do a very bad job of understanding what we read. In fact, every time we meet a word we have to expect it to have at least a slightly different meaning from the meanings it has had when we encountered it before, and if we are to read well we must become very skilled at using the context to discover meanings.

WRITING ASSIGNMENT

If we turn around and look at words from the point of view of the writer rather than from the point of view of the reader, it is obvious that when we write we have to supply a context for our words that makes what we mean by them clear to the reader. This is not always an easy task, partly because we civilized people still believe in magic. We tend to think that somehow, by magic, what we mean by a word will jump into the minds of our readers. But we must always remember that the reader has to interpret what we mean by a word from the context we supply. And if we do not give him enough clues in the context, he will not understand the meaning of our word.

1. Assume that Ocelot is the name of a new gas-turbine sports car or assume that Kittens is the name of a new kind of stretch slippers.

2. Choose one of these words. Create a context that will enable a reader to understand the meaning of the word. Do not define the word; do not tell the reader what the word means. But by using his wits and the context he should be able to discover what the word means. But by using his wits and the context he should be able to discover what the word means.

3. Compare the context you created with those made by other students for the same word. Are some of them quite different from yours? Even though they are different, do they work equally well?

4. Can you learn more about the car or the slippers from some contexts than you can from others?

5. Did you include material that was not essential to understanding the word? Did you have other reasons for including this material? What were your reasons?

WRITING ASSIGNMENT

Any word means something slightly different to each of us than it does to anyone else in the world. The word afraid or beautiful or want or happy or love or wise or hate means something different to each of us because each of us has had different experiences that we connect with the word. That is what makes us individuals instead of all of us being the same. That, too, is why we are sometimes lonely: our experiences and the words we use to name them are our own, and no one else will ever share exactly the same experiences or ever know exactly what we mean when we use words to name our experiences.

But words are the only tools we have to break out of our isolation, to share our experiences and our thoughts with other people. But we have to remember when we say, "I am afraid," or "I love you," or "I am happy," or "I want that," that no one else knows just what we mean, and if we want them to understand, we must tell them about the experiences which we have in mind when we use these words. Making our own experiences with Lov or fear, or wanting as real to them as possible is the only way we have to break out of our isolation and make contact with other people.

Choose one of the words we have mentioned or some other word that means a great deal to you. Write a paper in which you try to make someone else understand what the word means to you. Remember that if you want someone else to understand, you must describe in detail the experiences that the word reminds you of.

OREGON CURRICULUM STUDY CENTER

GENERALLY SPEAKING

THE PRINCIPLES OF GENERALIZATION, QUALIFICATION, AND SUPPORT

Rhetoric Curriculum III

Student Version

Student Version

INTRODUCTION

During the course of an average day we all make numerous statements of various kinds--about ourselves, about other people, about what happens, about what we think. We are all somewhat like the lady who said, "How can I know what I think till I have heard what I say?" If we look carefully at some of our statements, we may be able to make some interesting discoveries about what we think or, even more important, about <u>how</u> we think.

Lesson 1

You know a great deal already about making statements. You know that a clear sentence (or statement) has a noun phrase and a verb phrase, that it may have transformations. Now see if you can make a factual statement, and since it is wise to know what you are talking about, start with the subject on which you are the greatest living authority--yourself. What can you say about yourself that you believe is a <u>fact</u>? Think for a few moments, and when you have decided on a statement you can make about yourself, go up and write it on the blackboard.

When everyone in the class has written a statement on the board, read all the statements carefully. Are any of them true of more than one person in the class? Are any of the statements true of <u>everyone</u> in the class? Your teacher will ask one of you to write an <u>A</u> in front of each statement you decide is true of everyone in the group.

In all these statements marked <u>A</u>, you may change the subject noun phrase to "All the members of this class." Will you then need to change the verb? Now look at the remaining statements. Are any of them true of only <u>one</u> person? If so, your teacher will ask someone to mark these statements <u>O</u>. You may change the <u>O</u> statements so that the noun phrase reads "Only one member of this class." What change in the verb will you need to make this time?

The rest of the statements on the board you have decided are true of more than one person in the group but not true of all. Can you think of other changes you might make in the subject noun phrase to indicate how many members of the class these statements are true of? For example, you might change to "Many members of this class." Can you suggest other words you might use instead of <u>many</u>? Make a list of these words. You may put them all together in a list on the blackboard. Do you remember what words like this are called?

Your teacher will divide you into small groups to practice using these words in factual sentences about the class. See if your group can compose two factual sentences beginning with each of the subject noun phrases you have listed. You may want to appoint a chairman in each group to help you discuss the choices efficiently, and a secretary to write down the sentences as you formulate them. When you have finished, the secretary of each group may read the sentences to the class. Listen carefully to each one and see whether you all agree.

What you have done in this discussion is to form general statements about a specific group--your class. Do you think you could make a name for the thinking process you have been engaged in? Start with the adjective general, since you have begun with particular statements and expanded them into general statements. Can you change general into a verb that means "to make general"? Can you add an ending that transforms the adjective into a verb? When you have done that, see if you can change the verb into a noun that means "the process of making general." What ending can you add to a verb to make a noun?

ASSIGNMENT FOR SPEAKING

In the statements you have formed about the members of the class, you have been careful to decide how many people they might accurately be made about; you have qualified them with the determiners you selected. But you have probably read or heard many general statements not so carefully qualified that you were unwilling to accept as factual when you thought them over. You may have heard or read statements about teenagers, about women drivers, about people who like popular music. You may have objected to hearing or reading that blondes have more fun, or that all politicians are crooked, or that nobody really likes poetry. See if you can think of several generalizations you have questioned because they did not fit some instances you might recall. Write down two or three such statements, and see if you can think of an example or two that proves them inaccurate. Then select one that you would like to present to the class with yourreasons why it is not entirely accurate.

You will need to plan what you want to say, and you will want to consider the time you can use for your speech. Your teacher will give you a time limit--perhaps four or five minutes, depending on the class time you have for hearing speeches. A five-minute speech is not very long, and you will need to prepare carefully to say all that you need to say without running out of time.

Preparation for Speaking: First write down the generalization you want to ask the class to reconsider. Then make a list of all the reasons why you think the idea it expresses is mistaken or exaggerated. Is it partly true, or almost entirely mistaken? Think of an example that shows you are right about each of your reasons. Next, after you have made as complete a list as possible, look over your material and decide how much of it you can use in the time you will have. You may need to select your most important reasons if you cannot use them all.

Now consider what order you want to follow in presenting your talk. Here are a few questions you may ask yourself:

Do your reasons have a natural order: does one explain the next, or follow it in time order?
Are some reasons more important than others? Where will you want to place your most important reasons?

How can you begin your talk so that the class will be interested in hearing what you have to say? Can you begin with a reference to something familiar to the class--an event, or a selection everyone has read, or a program most of the class has seen or heard? Can you ask a question that they will expect the speech to answer for them? How can you give them an idea of what to expect without telling too much at the outset?

How can you close your talk so that the audience will remember clearly the point you have made? Can you summarize your idea, or use a familiar reference? Can you use a quotation that sums up your idea?

You should arrange time to try your speech aloud before you present it in class. You may need to do this at home, and if you can persuade your family or a friend to listen to you, you may try the speech out on someone before you give it in final form. You may have an opportunity to practice during the class hour if your teacher can arrange the schedule to allow time, but if this is not possible, set your own practice session. You will be more effective if you speak without notes. The best plan for many people is to make a brief outline and memorize the main points. If you want to be sure of opening and closing with precise words, you may write out the opening and concluding sentences and memorize them. If you do, you will need to learn them completely so that you are in no danger of forgetting the words.

Presenting the Speech: When the speeches are presented in class, listen carefully and follow each speaker's ideas. At the close of each speech, think back over what the speaker has said, and see if you can answer these questions about it:

1. What was the generalization on which the speaker wanted to set the audience straight?

2. Did the speaker present sound reasons for his (her) objections?

3. Did the speaker offer evidence to support the reasons?

4. Are you in reasonable agreement that the generalization needs to be qualified or rejected as the speaker proposed?

Your teacher may ask several students to make a brief critique of the speeches. If you are asked to evaluate one of the speeches for the class you may want to make a few brief notes, but you should not make them while the speaker is talking. During a speech, give it your full attention; you may make it difficult for the speaker if you are writing while he talks. Jot down your notes as soon as he has concluded, before the next speech begins. You may have time for class discussion of the speeches.

Lesson 2

In the preceding lesson, when you made general statements about your class you found the process fairly easy because everyone was present and you could get the information you needed. You could be reasonably sure you had the necessary evidence for a general statement. Would it be as easy to make general statements about your school? about the people in your city? How can you make generalizations, even qualified statements, if you cannot ask all the people concerned? Perhaps you would like to see how some writers have managed this problem.

Theodore Roosevelt, twenty-sixth President of the United States, was an enthusiastic outdoorsman, and from youth cultivated an interest in natural history. In one of his books, Hunting the Grizzly and other Sketches, he included this discussion of bears:

(1) Bear vary greatly in size and color, no less than in temper and habits. Old hunters speak much of them in their endless talks over the camp-fires and in the snow-bound winter huts. They insist on many species; not merely the black and the grizzly, but the brown, the cinnamon, the gray, the silver-tip, and others with names known only in certain localities, such as the range bear, the roach-back, and the smut-face. But, in spite of popular opinion to the contrary, most old hunters are very untrustworthy in dealing with points of natural history. They usually know only so much about any given game animal as will enable them to kill it. They study its habits solely with this end in view; and once slain they only examine it to see about its condition and fur. With rare exceptions they are quite incapable of passing judgment upon questions of specific identity or difference. When questioned, they not only advance perfectly impossible theories and facts in support of their views, but they rarely even agree as to the views themselves. One hunter will assert that the true grizzly is found only in California, heedless of the fact that the name was first used by Lewis and Clark as one of the titles they applied to the large bears of the plains country round the Upper Missouri, a quarter of a century before the California grizzly was known for fame. Another hunter will call any big brindled bear a grizzly no matter where it is found; and he and his companions will dispute by the hour as to whether a bear of large, but not extreme, size is a grizzly or a silver-tip. In Oregon the cinnamon bear is a phase of the small black bear; in Montana it is the plains variety of the large mountain silver-tip. I have myself seen the skins of two bears killed on the upper waters of Tongue River; one was that of a male, one of a female, and they had evidently just mated; yet one was distinctly a "silver-tip" and the other a "cinnamon."

The skin of one very big bear which I killed in the Bighorn has proved a standing puzzle to almost all the old hunters to whom I have shown it; rarely do any two of them agree as to whether it is a grizzly, a silver-tip, a cinnamon, or a "smut-face." Any bear with unusually long hair on the spine and shoulders, especially if killed in the spring, when the fur is shaggy, is forthwith dubbed a "roach-back." The average sporting writer, moreover joining with the more imaginative members of the "old hunter" variety in ascribing wildly various traits to these different bears. One comments on the superior prowess of the roach-back; the explanation being that a bear in early spring is apt to be ravenous from hunger. The next insists that the California grizzly is the only really dangerous bear; while another stoutly maintains that it does not compare in ferocity with what he calls the "smaller" silver-tip or cinnamon. And so on, and so on, without end. All of which is mere nonsense.

(2) Nevertheless, it is no easy task to determine how many species or varieties of bear actually do exist in the United States, and I cannot even say without doubt that a very large set of skins and skulls would not show a nearly complete intergradation between the most widely separated individuals. However, there are certainly two very distinct types, which differ almost as widely from each other as a wapiti does from a mule deer, and which exist in the same localities in most heavily timbered portions of the Rockies. One is the small black bear which will average about two hundred pounds' weight, with fine, glossy, black fur, and the fore-claws but little longer than the hinder ones; in fact the hairs of the fore-paw often reach to their tips. This bear is a tree-climber. It is the only kind found east of the great plains, and it is also plentiful in the forest-clad portions of the Rockies, being common in most heavily timbered tracts throughout the United States. The other is the grizzly, which weighs three or four times as much as the black, and has a pelt of coarse hair, which is in color gray, grizzled, or brown of various shades. It is not a tree-climber, and the fore-claws are very long, much longer than the hinder ones. It is found from the great plains west of the Mississippi to the Pacific coast. This bear inhabits indifferently the lowland and mountain; the deep woods, and the barren plains where the only cover is the stunted growth fringing the streams. These two types are very distinct in every way, and their differences are not at all dependent upon mere geographical considerations; for they are often found in the same district. Thus I found them both in the Bighorn Mountains, each type being in extreme form, while the specimens I shot showed no trace of intergradation. The huge, grizzled, long-clawed beast, and its little glossy-coated, short-clawed, tree-climbing brother roamed over exactly the same country in these mountains; but they were as distinct in habits, and mixed as little together as moose and caribou.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. In this selection Roosevelt is objecting to the generalizations old hunters make about bears. What specific generalizations does he think are wrong? What evidence does he give to support his contention that these ideas are inaccurate?

2. How does Roosevelt account for the inaccuracy of the hunters? On what have they based their generalizations? On what has he based the generalizations he himself makes about bears in the second paragraph? Why does he evidently consider his basis more sound? Where does he qualify his generalizations?

3. In the first paragraph you may have noticed that Roosevelt is making general statements about something besides bears. What is he generalizing about? What is his source of information about that subject? Now look carefully at the general statements he makes. What determiners does he use to qualify these statements? Can you make a list of them? How many times does he use "all" or an equivalent wording?

4. Which do you think is likely to be more reliable on the subject of bears--Roosevelt, or the hunters? Why?

You might be interested in comparing Roosevelt's description of bears with a description by a scientist. Victor H. Cahalane says of black bears:

(For text, see Mammals of North America by Victor H. Cahalane; The Macmillan Company, New York, 1947; beginning on p. 143 with "In the western half of the continent, the brown. . ." and ending with ". . .than a small adult female grizzly.")

Of the grizzly, Cahalane wrote:

(For text, see Mammals of North America, ibid.; beginning on p. 147 with "Many persons ask how they. . ." and ending on p. 148 with ". . .busily shaking down the apples.")

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. You may notice that this description of bears uses a good deal of generalization. Why would a scientist be able to generalize more positively than Roosevelt or the hunters? Where does this author qualify his statements? Make a list of the determiners or qualifying phrases he uses.

2. Does this description indicate that Roosevelt might be justified for criticizing the hunters? What details help you decide? Can you see any reasons why the hunters might easily be confused? Would you say the conclusions of the hunters were entirely wrong? Why or why not?

3. Can you form any conclusions about the knowledge necessary for the making of sound generalizations?
Can you form any conclusions about the importance of purpose in making generalizations?

EXERCISE

1. **Bring to class an example of a sweeping statement that you have heard someone make about students or teachers.**

2. **Advertising often uses sweeping or glittering generalities. Bring an example from a magazine, newspaper, or television program.**

3. **The letters to the editor section of the newspaper often contain examples of unqualified generalizations. Examine this section for several days to see how many examples you can bring to class.**

Lesson 3

Generalizations serve a variety of purposes. Both Theodore Roosevelt and Victor Cahalane use generalizations to aid them in reporting about bears. Each draws his generalizations from within the limits of his experience. In the next selection Ernie Pyle draws generalizations about the Normandy landing so that he can evoke a response from the reader.

"On the Road to Berlin"

by Ernie Pyle

(For text, see Brave Men by Ernie Pyle; Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1944; beginning on p. 250 with "I took a walk along the historic coast of Normandy. . ." and ending on p. 252 with ". . . which he saw so briefly.")

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Substance

1. Find the general statement that best indicates the purpose of Ernie Pyle's essay. What is the meaning of expendable? Is the purpose simple description, or something more? How can you tell?

2. Why did he switch from I to we in paragraph 4?

3. Pyle says the detail on the beach was infinite. Why, then, did he include the following details:
   a. the letters from home, with addresses neatly razored out
   b. the dog
   c. the smooth rock
   d. the tennis racket

4. Pyle says he doesn't know why he picked up the Bible or why he put it down. Can you see any reason for including these actions in his account?

5. What reason can you see for including the material about the whims of the Normandy tides? What is the implied relationship between these whims and the good-luck emblems in paragraph 2?

6. What is the main impression he wants the reader to get from the scene? What details in the essay help to build this picture?

7. What is ironic about the squads of men salvaging ammunition and equipment that was still usable? What other examples of irony can you find?

Structure

1. You have already learned that an author may arrange details of a scene in relation to himself--where he is standing. Does Pyle do this? If not, what arrangement does he use? What effect does his arrangement achieve?

2. What, if any, are the main divisions in Pyle's essay?

3. Although the material on the beach is disorganized, Pyle does give some order to his description by the repetition of certain words and phrases. Go through the essay and find the repeated words that help to give continuity.

Style

1. Why does the author begin the opening paragraph as he does? How do the two meanings of sleeping help to advance the purpose? Would this sentence be a better ending for the paragraph: "Many men were

killed in the Normandy landing during World War II." ?

2. What is the effect of including the material on the jellyfish? How do the final words of paragraph 2 help the main idea?

3. What is ironic about the use of "afford" in paragraphs 10 and 11 ?

4. What is unusual about the use of "sufficient" in paragraph 10 ?

5. What is the effect of the repetition of "nothing at all" in paragraph 11 ?

6. What is the effect of listing socks and shoe polish, sewing kits, diaries, Bibles, and hand grenades in that order?

WRITING ASSIGNMENT

Almost everyone has viewed a scene of havoc of some sort, either personally or on television. Recall a scene that you were able to observe in detail--a fire, a flood, a severe storm that destroyed property. First write a report of the disaster in which you generalize about the extent of the damage. Imagine that the report is for an insurance company or some other agency interested in an account of the catastrophe and the damages. Then write a description of the scene for a close friend who lives in another part of the country and has not seen the havoc. This time include both an idea of the extent of the damage and also the feelings it arouses in you. In other words, try to suggest the dramatic experience of the scene. Be sure that you explain your relation to the scene and the limits of your observations. How will your difference in purpose affect the language that you use?

Lesson 4

We have seen that people make generalizations for various purposes on the basis of their observations. In the selection by Ernie Pyle we have seen generalization from details added up to create an impression of scene and action. Frequently, too, we generalize from our observations to try to understand the interesting world around us. In the following selection a scientist in the jungle puts together some of his experiences and experiments to try to explain the strange habits of a jungle creature--the sloth.

"The Jungle Sluggard"

(For text, see "The Jungle Sluggard" by William Beebe from Jungle Days; Garden City Publishing Company, Garden City, New York, 1923; selection on p. 98 beginning with "Instead of reviewing all the observations. . ." and ending ". . . strange, uncanny minds."; selection beginning on p. 105 with "The principal difference between the. . ." and ending on p. 109 with ". . . it has encountered a branch"; selection beginning on p. 110 with "When a very young sloth. . ." and ending on p. 111 with ". . . tumbles ignominiously to the ground.")

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Substance

1. What is Beebe's central idea in the selection? Where does he state it?

2. From what sources of information is he writing?

3. What evidence does he give to support his main idea?

4. How many sloths does he talk about in the account of the two courtships? Can you explain why this evidence is convincing?

5. Where does he make generalizations?

Structure

1. Can you explain why Beebe devotes more time and space to the first courtship than to the second? (It is almost twice as long).

2. What is the relation of the third paragraph to the fourth? Can you see a word in the first sentence of paragraph 4 that shows the relation?

3. How are the last two paragraphs related? Could the order of these two paragraphs be reversed without lessening or changing the effect? Explain.

Style

1. What sentences in this selection did you find most amusing?

2. Where do you see examples of understatement used for humor? exaggeration?

3. How does Beebe make you feel the slowness of the sloth? How does the length of the sentences contribute to this effect?

4. In the last sentence of paragraph 3, what does the author accomplish by interrupting the idea with the material set off by dashes? Can you find any other similar interruptions? Are they used for the same purpose?

EXERCISES

Exercise 1

1. With your dictionary, define the following words in their context in the selection:

perpetrated (1)	clambered (5)	stolid (4)
psychology (1)	ensconced (3)	opaque (4)
conception (1)	disdained (3)	reversion (6)
uncanny (1)	iguana (3)	ignominiously (6)
presages (2)	languidly (3)	

2. What is unusual about the use of each of the following words:

perpetrated (1)
uncanny (1)
delightful (2)
ensconced (3)
excavated (3)
sleeping beauty (3)

Exercise 2

1. Find ten words that help to give the impression of the slowness of action.

2. How many times does the author use the intensifier very in this selection? What words does he substitute for very?

Exercise 3

See if you can formulate a generalization about how the style reinforces the meaning in this selection.

Sometimes in our endeavors to understand the world we can experiment or run tests to check out a theory we think may be accurate. In the same selection from which the passages you have just read were taken, Beebe describes his way of proving a theory:

Even in the jungle sloths are not always the static creatures which their vegetable-like life would lead us to believe, as I was able to prove many years ago. A young male was brought in by Indians and after keeping it a few days I shaved off two patches of hair from the center of the back and labelling it with a metal tag I turned it loose. Forty-eight days later it was captured near a small settlement of bovianders several miles farther up and across the river. During this time it must have traversed four miles of jungle and one of river.

At the beginning of the paragraph Beebe makes a generalization about the sloth; what is it? How did he prove it? How many instances did he observe? See if you can explain why the proof is sufficient.

Lesson 5

We have seen in the preceding selections how scientists use generalizations to try to understand and describe the phenomena that interest them. In the practical world of daily life we study the actions of other people also to try to understand their behavior and to determine what our attitudes can or should be toward others. One of the groups most frequently observed today is the group you yourselves belong to--the teenagers. You have doubtless felt the effects of various attitudes people adopt toward this group as a result of the generalizations they have made. In the following selection, Leonard Buder generalizes about the behavior of teenagers and about the adult world that affects them. As you read it, observe the attitudes he expresses and the kind of evidence on which his generalizations are based.

I

"The Children of Conformity"

by Leonard Buder

(For text, see "The Children of Conformity" by Leonard Buder in Saturday Review, September 14, 1957; beginning on p. 20 with "Our children 'have abandoned causes for . . ." and ending on p. 21 with ". . .to become an individual.")

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Substance

1. What is the author's purpose in this selection? Can you state the main idea in a single sentence?

2. To whom is the author writing--to teenagers or to adults? How can you tell?

3. What kind of evidence does he use to support his point? How much does he depend on his own observation? What other evidence does he use?

4. Does he offer enough evidence to establish his point? Why or why not? Where has he used single instances? How do they establish the point, if they do?

5. What are the generalizations he draws from the evidence? Are they stated positively as applying to all teenagers, or are they qualified? Do they check with your experience?

6. What does he conclude from each of the instances listed at the beginning of the essay?

7. What attitudes does he express toward teenagers? toward adults? What attitudes does he seem to think adults should take toward teenagers?

Structure

1. Why does Buder begin with a series of instances? Does he use them all in the analysis that follows? Where do the ideas of each one appear later in the essay?

2. What is the purpose of paragraph 6? Which sentence in paragraph 7 is a key to both the preceding and the following material?

3. To what part of his idea does he devote the most space? Why?

Style

1. What is the tone of Buder's article? Is he objective, or does he reflect strong emotion about his subject? How can you tell? How much use does he make of words that express opinion? Are these words moderate? Are they justified by the evidence?

2. How effective are the quotations in the essay? Look specially at paragraph 5 and at the long quotation from Van Til.

3. What kind of qualifying words has Buder used? Look particularly at verbs, at determiners, and at adverbs.

EXERCISES

Exercise 1

Select one of the instances at the opening of the essay and decide what the author thinks it shows about modern teenagers. Then make a list of all the evidence he uses to support this interpretation.

Exercise 2

In the final sentence of the selection, look carefully at all the qualifying words. Then look through the selection and find one example of each of the following:
a. a verb that helps to qualify.
b. an adverb that qualifies.
c. a determiner or an adjective that qualifies.
d. a phrase or clause that qualifies.

II

Another contemporary writer, Marya Mannes, has also written about teenagers in a somewhat different vein. In the following selection, see whether you find essentially different generalizations or a different attitude expressed.

(For text, see "The New Upper Class, The Kids" by Marya Mannes, from But Will It Sell?; J. B. Lippincott Company, 1964; beginning on p. 81 with "The case for the. . ." and ending on p. 88 with ". . .lynch him when he gets home.")

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Substance

1. What is the author's purpose in this selection? Can you state the idea in a single sentence?

2. Is this selection addressed to the same audience as Buder's? Who are the ladies and gentlemen of the jury?

3. What generalizations does this author make about children and teenagers? Are any of them the same as those you found in the Buder selection? Are any different? Are they as well qualified?

4. What kind of evidence are the generalizations in this selection based on? Are the "exhibits" at the beginning real or imagined instances? Are the instances described in the testimony of "witnesses" real? How much does this affect the value of the instances to the idea? Does this author make more or less use than Buder did of typical instances? How effectively are the generalizatiors supported? Does the evidence check with your experience?

5. What attitudes does this author express toward young people? toward adults? How do the attitudes differ from those expressed in the Buder selection? How did you determine the attitude reflected here?

Structure

1. Why does this author use a legal format for presenting her ideas? Is it effective for her purpose? Why?

2. In the development of this idea, has the author used essentially the same pattern Buder used, or is it different? Explain. Where are the inter-protations of the instances explained? Does this selection also make use of effective quotations?

3. Why does this author use a much longer conclusion than Buder did? Which part of the development of the idea is given the most space? Why?

4. The parts of this essay are clearly marked by transitional sentences. Can you identify them? Look through the selection and see if you can find all the sentences that set forth the framework of thought.

Style

1. Is the tone of this essay formal or informal? How can you tell? How seriously do you think the author means to be taken? Why does she use the last sentence?

2. How much does this author depend on words that express opinion? See if you can find examples of words that contain judgments; look carefully at the adjectives, nouns, and verbs.

3. Do you find words in this essay that are unfamiliar to you? Can you define each of the following: (see if you can define the word from the context before you look it up)

inordinate (9)	perforce (32)	beleaguered (35)
malady (29)	bee-hived (33)	precocious (36)
showboating (29)	pornography (33)	rectitude (36)
tenets (32)	aggregate (34)	psychic (37)

4. Where do you find examples of slang in this selection?

ASSIGNMENT FOR WRITING

After your analysis of discussions of teenagers by adults, you might like an opportunity to make your own generalization. You know quite a few teenagers yourself, and since you probably see them when adults are not around, you may have some interesting--and different--insights of your own. When you try to put your observations together you have the same problems anyone--adult or teenager--has in arriving at a responsible statement based on adequate evidence.

Preparation for Writing--the Problem of Qualification

A sound generalization, as you have seen, must be qualified so that it does not go beyond the limits of the writer's knowledge. It might be wise to consider the possible ways of qualifying a statement before you attempt to express your own ideas.

Suppose, for example, you wanted to generalize about teenagers as drivers of automobiles. If you start with the simple statement, "Teenagers are careful drivers," what proportion of teenagers are you talking about? If you use no determiner, do you imply <u>all</u> teenagers or only a part? Can you qualify the statement with determiners? Try making a list of all the possibilities: use brackets to show that they are optional, as you do in your grammar rules.

{ All / Some } teenagers are careful drivers.

Determiners are one way to qualify. Can you think of others? Would it be possible to qualify a statement with an adverb like sometimes? Try the sentence with an option for adverbs, and list as many as you can think of.

{ Determiner } teenagers are { sometimes } careful drivers.

Is it possible to qualify with a phrase or clause? If, for example, you added (or began the sentence with) a clause, "If they are properly taught," would the sentence be qualified? Try the sentence with as many optional clauses as you can:

{ If they are properly taught } { determiner } teenagers are careful drivers.

This kind of qualification, you can perhaps see at once, can also be expressed in a clause after "teenagers"--Teenagers who are carefully taught are careful drivers.

Now look at all the possible qualifications you have listed. Sentences can use more than one kind in combination, as you have found in the selections. See now if you can use the possibilities to make of this statement the best sentence to express your own opinion about teenage drivers. The class might like to hear all the sentences when you have finished framing them.

Writing Assignment

You have experimented with qualifying a given statement; now try putting the principle to use in a statement of your own. What possible generalizations about teenagers can you make and support? Think through your observations of young people you have known or seen or read about and formulate a general statement that expresses your most careful judgment. You may consider some of the general statements you have heard and disagreed with, or you may develop an idea you have derived from your observation and thought through. If you use your reading as a source, remember that your reader will want to know exactly where you got the information--who said it, and in what context. When you have written your paper, read it over carefully to see whether you have supported your point.

Lesson 6

One of the most important reasons for making generalizations goes beyond describing and understanding the world and other people: we generalize to determine a policy and take action. If several accidents occur at a particular street corner, for example, the City Council is likely to decide that the corner is dangerous and vote to install a traffic light. Our traffic regulations are usually established as the result of generalizations drawn from study of the flow of traffic.

Here are some other instances. Can you see what principle of generalization they have in common?

1. A Rexburg High School study showed that no straight A students drove automobiles to school; eighty-three per cent of the F students did drive their own automobiles to school. From these figures, the Board of Education of Rexburg, Idaho, concluded that driving automobiles affected study habits and restricted student driving.

2. A driver who had been judged by the traffic court to be responsible in four accidents had his driving insurance cancelled by the insurance company.

3. Nineteen-year old Galileo Galilei, looking at a light swinging from the ceiling of a church in Pisa and timing the movements by the beats of his pulse, concluded that a pendulum would always take as long a time to move through a large arc as through a small one. This conclusion eventually made possible the construction of the clock.

What do these three seemingly unrelated instances have in common? What kind of generalization is each one based on? Each one, you can see, bases an action or a decision on what has happened in the past. Can you state the general principle that Galileo and the insurance company and the Board of Education assumed to be valid?

Can you apply this principle to your own experience? You may have noticed it at work in animals, for example. Animals have, in a limited sense, the ability to go from a series of particular instances to a general idea. You may have a cat that comes up every time the refrigerator door opens. The cat has been conditioned through his experience to expect that the opening of the refrigerator door will always reward him with food. Can you think of an example of some animal that similarly judged that because an event sometimes happened it would always happen?

II. Dangers in Generalizing

There are differences, however, between a human's ability to generalize and an animal's. Every time the door opens the cat expects to be

fed. If you and your family are soft-hearted, perhaps he will be; but in all likelihood he will not. Another word for likelihood is probability Men, too, live on assumptions based on past experience. We assume that the sun will come up tomorrow because it has always come up in the past. But people can recognize that something catastrophic could disrupt the rotation of the earth and its relation to the sun. People have the capacity to understand the concept of probability. All three of the examples of generalization at the beginning of this lesson are based on the assumption that past events are likely to recur in similar circumstances, but can you accept all predictions with the same degree of certainty? In other words, are some generalizations more probable than others? Can any prediction of the future be certain?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Can you be absolutely positive, now and for all time, about any of the generalizations made in the three examples given at the beginning of this lesson?
   a. Would you always get the same results in the high school automobile study? What factors might change the results? If the person making the study had mentioned only the students making poor grades and said nothing about A students, would you have been more willing or less willing to accept the findings of the study and the action of the board? To what extent was the generalization the board made based on fact and to what extent was it based on opinion?
   b. Was the decision of the insurance company based on sufficient instances? Would you say the generalization the company made was reliable?
   c. How accurate is the heart beat as a measure? Why did Galileo measure the movement against his beat? If you repeated his study using a stop watch, would you expect to get the same results?
   d. Where did the cat make a mistake in his generalization--if he did? Would this depend on the actions of the family?

Even if you were trying to make a sound generalization based on collected facts, you would find some difficulties in making sure your conclusions were valid. Suppose, for example, you wanted to know what people in the United States think about popular music. If you asked the members of the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra only, would you have a complete answer? If you asked the members of your class only, would you have a more complete answer?

Although you have the capacity to evaluate the probable truth of a general statement, numerous conditions might interfere with the judgment you make--ignorance of some facts, personal prejudices, the deliberate intent to mislead by the person who made the study, inability to collect material under laboratory conditions. How, then, can you check the probable truth of your general statements? Here are some possible tests. Can you add to them?

1. Be sure you have used a reasonable number of instances before you make a generalization. Concluding from too few examples results in hasty generalization, an error called a fallacy.

2. Be sure the instances are typical--in other words, that they represent various points of view.

3. Be sure that you consider evidence on the other side. Because two events occur one after the other, does the first necessarily cause the second?

4. Be sure you do not let your own prejudice or preconception influence your thinking.

EXERCISE

In the following situations, who has erred in the drawing of generalizations?

1. May Johnson has met two girls from Hillsdale Elementary School, an institution of three hundred students. Both of these girls later walked by May without speaking. She told her friends that girls from Hillsdale School were not friendly.

2. Mrs. Black saw three students from your school skipping school. She told her husband that your school was full of juvenile delinquents.

3. To determine whether students liked large group teaching in geography, the instructor asked the members of honors English classes to fill out a questionnaire. He found that they disliked the large group because the lectures were too repetitious. He therefore concluded that large group teaching was disliked by students.

4. A study of children in trouble with the law enforcement officers showed that the favorite reading material of these children was comic magazines. The study generalized that comic magazines caused juvenile delinquency. (What would you need to know before you accepted this generalization? Why would it be difficult to test this conclusion adequately?

5. A student reporter mentioned in a story he wrote about a star athlete in his school that he was surprised to discover that the athlete was an honor student. (What generalization does the author imply about athletes?)

6. A school newspaper interviewer of a new English teacher expressed surprise that her favorite hobby was skiing. (What generalizations about English teachers and about skiing does this surprise imply?)

You may be interested in what a famous writer has to say about this problem. James Thurber, in "What a Lovely Generalization," takes an unusual approach to the problem of misleading statements.

"What a Lovely Generalization!"

by James Thurber

(For text, see Thurber Country ; Simon and Schuster, New York, 1953; beginning on p. 52 with "I have collected, in my time, . . ." and ending on p. 57 with ". . . Good hunting.")

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Substance

1. What is Thurber's purpose in this paper? Is his stated purpose the real one?

2. By what means does he define a sweeping statement or broad generalization? From your reading of this paper, can you define a sweeping statement in a single sentence?

3. How does Thurber classify generalizations? You may need to define some of his terms--libellous and idiosyncratic, for example. Re-classify them according to the types of test the speaker failed to make. Try three groups: those based on too few instances (hasty

generalization); those based on samplings that are not representational of the whole; and those based on a preconception.

4. How do his examples support his statement that women make three to five times as many broad generalizations as men?

5. Examine the reasons Thurber gives in paragraphs 3 and 4 for not believing the statement "There are no pianos in Japan." Does he question the lady's reliability as an authority? Which reason does he most emphasize? On what generalization is his reasoning based? Does he offer any evidence that his assumption is sound? Which of the tests is violated in the generalization that the Japanese imitate everything in Western culture? Why does Thurber add the material about the Saturday Evening Post article?

6. Why do the generalizations "Gamblers hate women" and "Sopranos drive men crazy" have an "authentic ring" for Thurber? How is the statement about women in paragraph 2 related to this point? Can you form any general impression from this paper about Thurber's attitude toward women? Where else does he mention women? If anyone in class has read "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" or Thurber's story "In the Catbird Seat," he may be able to add to the discussion of Thurber's view of women.

7. Why does Thurber use the imagined breakfast scene of the General? How does it show that the lady had made a sweeping generalization? How does the story establish his point?

8. What makes a generalization "lovely" for Thurber? Where does he himself make generalizations without identifying them? Are they all sweeping?

Structure

1. What are the main divisions of the idea in this selection?

2. Why does Thurber start paragraph 8 with the words "in conclusion"? Is this really the concluding idea?

3. Why does Thurber devote the opening sentences to the hazards of his early hobbies? Where does he use this material later? How does his use of "finger-tapper" and "rewrite man" give unity to the essay? What effect does he get by describing the generalization about the finger tapper as questionable and the generalization about the rewrite man as abusive? Why did he include the material about the rewrite man in paragraph 7?

4. What other words give unity to the selection?

5. How do the elaborate examples and the careful organization help the tone and purpose? Are they part of the contrast?

Style

1. Is Thurber's language formal or informal? Find examples that support your conclusion. What does he mean by "cricket," for example? Would "fair" create the same effect? Can you rephrase the sentence about what happened to the paperweights in high school slang?

2. What do the words "intangible" and "Impalpable" mean? Could they have more than one meaning as Thurber uses them? What other words give a seemingly serious tone to the opening paragraph? How does the contrast between the language and the reasoning give the essay a tone of mock seriousness or irony? How does the use of "rare and cherished pieces" in paragraph 2 continue this tone? How effective is the language in furthering the purpose of the paper?

3. What effect does Thurber achieve with the order of verb phrases in the first sentence of paragraph 4? How does he use the same principle in paragraph 4?

4. How does the word "absurd" help the humor in paragraph 3, especially after the long description of the motion picture scene?

5. How is the use of the word "lovely" in the title consistent with the tone and purpose?

EXERCISE

Making a generalization from instances

1. Imagine that you are looking at the following words for the first time. What generalization can you make about the relationship between i and e ?

   achieve besiege cashier chief mischievous piece siege

2. How will you need to qualify this generalization to include the following:

   ceiling conceive deceit receipt receive

3. What does the dictionary tell you about the pronunciation or background of the following words that will lead you to further qualifications?

freight	neighbor	reign	vein	weight
ancient	conscience	efficient	proficient	sufficient
neither	foreigner	counterfeit		weird

4. Do any of the following generalizations square with, or rest upon, your analysis of the usual placement of e and i in English words? In any of them would you use a determiner--most, many, some, few, probably,

possibly?

English has so many exceptions that spelling rules have no value.

Spelling rules can be of { the most / much / some } value if you do not have a dictionary and must take a chance.
A new word containing e and i will have the i before the e unless the word contains a c before the e.

ASSIGNMENT FOR WRITING

Select one of the following assignments:

1. If you are in a science class where you are performing an experiment that requires you to move from the particular instance to a generalization, write a report of that experiment. Be sure to include all the steps that you went through and the precautions you took to insure that your results were valid. Explain each step as you go along, and the conclusions you drew from it. Check to see that you inform the reader early in the paper about what you were investigating. Check to see whether your generalization is carefully qualified.

2. Make your own study of the habits or preferences of your schoolmates. Formulate a hypothesis about styles in one of the following: clothes worn, hair cuts, jewelry, color preferences, the number of books carried. Station yourself in a convenient position before school, at lunch time, or after school for two different fifteen minute periods. Write up your observations and make a general statement about preferences in your school.

3. If your library facilities permit, study the subject matter of the news and editorial pages of the newspapers or news magazines printed on the day or week when you were born, or when you were five years old. Classify the kind of news you find and the chief problems of the times. Then make a comparable study of the news of this week or day and generalize about any differences or similarities. For example, almost every issue of today's papers carries a war story. Did the newspapers or magazines on your birthday include similar stories? Was it the same war? Check to see that you have supported your generalizations with sufficient evidence. Be sure also that you have qualified your statements properly.

REVIEW EXERCISE

1. What is a generalization?

2. What are some of the ways to qualify generalizations? With what words?

3. What are the tests of sound generalizations?

OREGON CURRICULUM STUDY CENTER

FLIGHT OF FANCY

(A Unit on Imagined Point of View)

Rhetoric Curriculum III

Student Version

INTRODUCTION

In most of the writing you have done so far this year, you have expressed your own opinion. When you described an object, you described it as you saw it; when you discussed a subject, you stressed the points that were the most important to you. Yet you are aware that your opinion is not the only opinion in the world. You have discussed various attitudes, often attitudes different from yours, and in conversation you doubtless find yourself sometimes disagreeing with your friends, perhaps over which football team or which popular singer is the best. You may have had disagreements with your parents about the best time to clean your room or mow the lawn.

It is sometimes difficult, as you may have found out, to understand another person's point of view. Can you think of times when you have taken part in arguments because you and another person were seeing a subject differently? People your age are not alone in having this difficulty. History books differ because one author analyzes an event in the past and makes an interpretation different from that of another historian. Would a British historian be likely to give the same impression of the American Revolutionary War as an American historian? It is difficult to put ourselves in another person's place and imagine how we might feel in his circumstances. One of the reasons people, and nations, have disagreements is that people cannot or will not see another point of view on a subject.

We can sometimes imagine how other people might feel, and our reading helps us. Authors of stories use various points of view. An author may tell a story from one character's point of view entirely, describing the events only as the character would see them. In Mark Twain's Roughing It, all the action is described as the main character sees it and feels about it. In "Paul's Case" by Cather, the story is told by an onlooker who is merely observing the action and relating it to someone else. Sometimes an author tells a story as it might seem to an animal, a non-human, in order to give the reader unusual reactions to common-place actions.

Lesson 1

For the most part, we look at the world through our own eyes; we are concerned with how places and people look to us, and how they affect us. We can be surprised to discover that a party we thought dull seemed exciting to someone else, or that a book we found boring delights some of our friends. We can sometimes learn about ourselves and about the world around us by imagining how things might look to someone else, or to an animal, or to an inanimate object. Here is a very old poem in which the author imagines how a storm might describe itself and the world it passes through. It is written in the form of a riddle.

"Storm on Land"

(For text, translated by Burton Raffel, see Poems from the Old English; University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1960, 1964; p. 82.)

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Who is talking in the poem? How does the speaker describe himself? What actions does the speaker describe? What does line 12 refer to; what that once "protected the world" and "sheltered men" does the speaker "bear on my back"?

2. How does the speaker seem to feel about the actions described? Is he boasting? Is he apologizing? What attitude does he seem to take toward people? How does the poem convey this attitude?

3. What does the poem seem to say about the cause of storms? In which lines do you find your answer? Why are the opening and closing sentences in the poem phrased as questions?

ASSIGNMENT FOR WRITING

You might like to experiment with the kind of imagining that the poet has done in this riddle. Can you picture the world as a non-human object might see it? What might a basketball think, if it could think, as it bounced its way through life? Might it dread every minute it had to bounce on a hard floor? Does a baseball tremble for its life when it sees sharp stones? A door knocker, if it could think, might have an equally interesting idea of itself and the world; it might see differences in the hands that lift it; it might watch the people who pass the house and notice the various sights of the street.

Select an inanimate object, and either describe it as you imagine it might describe itself, or explain what it might see and feel of its surroundings. You may make it into a riddle if you wish. You might choose a bobby pin, a pencil, a dish, a safety pin, a baseball, or any other object. Imagine yourself in that position, and then think about where you are in relation to other objects and what exactly you would be able to see and feel. Make sure as you write that you keep the description consistent. If you select an object that is only an inch high, anything ten inches high would seem like a skyscraper to it.

In your first draft, concentrate primarily on making your description consistent. When you have finished the draft, check your paper for spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure. You may wish to ask your teacher to look over your essay before you write the final draft.

Lesson 2

Some authors tell a story from the point of view of an animal. In both of the following selections, the authors are using this technique in telling a story.

I

In this story by Virginia Woolf, Flush is a cocker spaniel that was owned by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, wife of the English poet Robert Browning ("How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix"). He was stolen by a gang who made their living by stealing the pets of wealthy Londoners and holding them for ransom. The following selection describes the room in which Flush was kept for five days before he was returned to Mrs. Browning.

Flush

by Virginia Woolf

(For text, see Flush by Virginia Woolf; Harcourt, Brace & World, New York, 1933; selection beginning on p. 90 with "Flush was going through the most terrible experience. . . " and ending on p. 95 with ". . . it was not Miss Barrett." and selection beginning on p. 105 with "Saturday was the fifth day. . . " and ending on p. 110 with ". . . he lay on the sofa at her feet.")

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

Substance

1. From whose point of view is most of this story told?

2. Are the descriptions of the prison consistent with the limits of the main character's vision? How are they kep consistent in the description of the room? Of the people? When people are in the room, why does the author use none of the actual words they speak?

3. How does the author let the reader know what is happening by means of

Flush's point of view? Does she ever change the point of view? Where? What is the purpose of the change? How does the author keep the reader from being confused as she changes points of view?

Structure

1. How does the author use questions in the selection? What effect do they create in the story?

2. What is the purpose of the first sentence in paragraph 1?

3. In the third paragraph, why does the author include the last three sentences?

Style

1. Are the sentences in this selection mainly long or short? How do they help to suggest the thoughts of a dog? What effect does the length of the sentences create?

2. The first paragraph mentions great boots, draggled skirts, and a heavy hand. In only a few places do we see a complete person doing something. Can you find these few places? Why does the author refer to parts of people rather than to an entire person?

3. What words or phrases help to describe the place where Flush was taken? Does Flush think like a human? What things impress him most? Would a human be impressed by the same things? What details of the description might have been different if the author were writing about a kidnapped child, not a dog?

EXERCISE

Read the following paragraph and compare it with the corresponding description in paragraph 2:

> ....But it was only a man who pushed them aside and walked to a chair upon which he sat. Then gradually it became darker. He could barely make out what else was in the room. A candle was placed on the ledge over the fireplace. A flare burnt outside. By its inadequate light, Flush could see faces passing outside, looking in at the window. Then they came in, until the small room became so crowded that he had to move back and lie even closer to the wall. These people--some were poorly dressed, others were gaudily garbed--sat on the floor or leaned over the table.

1. How does this paragraph differ from paragraph 2?

2. Does this paragraph give you the same impression of Flush's prison that you felt from reading the original? What makes the difference?

3. Which words suggest the filthiness of the place? Which suggest the kind of people? Which show Flush's fear?

Another writer tells the story of a non-human creature in The Peregrine Falcon, a book about a young falcon named Varda who has travelled south from her birthplace in the northern Canadian woods around Hudson's Bay to the seacoast of North Carolina. She has avoided dangers of all types up to now in her travels, but her luck has run out in this chapter of her story.

A few of the terms may be unfamiliar to you. A tiercel is a young male falcon, a haggard is an older falcon, and jesses are the leather straps which attach a captured falcon to its perch. Falconry is a very old sport, and most of the techniques, equipment, and terms have been unchanged since the Middle Ages.

II

The Peregrine Falcon

by Robert Murphy

(For text, see Robert Murphy's The Peregrine Falcon; Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1963; beginning on p. 89 with "Varda flew almost to the inlet at . . ." and ending on p. 95 with ". . .them and fall asleep again.")

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. There are several words in this selection which may be unfamiliar to you. If you cannot determine their meanings from their context, look them up in the dictionary.

a. inexorably
b. ignominiously
c. malleable
d. apparition
e. kaleidoscopic
f. prevail

Substance

1. From whose point of view is this story told? Where does the point of view change? How does the author make the shift without confusing you?

2. Where does the author use the same technique Virginia Woolf used in having Flush remember his life in Wimpole Street? Is this technique used for the same reason?

3. When the falconer is trying to feed Varda, what sorts of movements does he make? In the description of his movements, what sorts of sentences are used? How do they help the effect?

Structure and Style

1. In the last part of paragraph 9, why does the author describe the movements of just the hand instead of the falconer?

2. What is the main idea in this selection? Where is it stated? How is it unified?

3. What action is being described in paragraphs 9, 10 and 11? What words are used to describe this action?

Exercise

Find a cartoon in a newspaper or magazine that uses the point of view of a non-human. Be prepared to explain the point of view to the class. If your school provides an overhead or opaque projector you may be able to display your cartoon as you talk. You will need to plan what you want to say; you should not need more than three or four sentences.

Lesson 3

Sometimes authors use unusual points of view to make comments about the world we live in. By having nonhuman creatures comment about the human world, they can sometimes make profound statements in a striking way. In the following three selections, the author makes use of this technique.

The first two selections by Don Marquis are written from the point of view of archy, a cockroach who insists that in a former life he was a poet, but in this life has sunk to being a cockroach. archy types letters nightly, but with extreme difficulty. He is able, with much effort, to turn the roller on the typewriter to start a new line, but he is unable to make capital letters, and punctuation is beyond him. He makes these comments about himself.

> (For selection, see the lives and times of archy and mehitabel by Don Marquis; Doubleday, New York, 1935; p. 20, beginning with "i see things from the under side. . ." and ending with ". . .can call me archy")

Can you see how the author is suggesting a cockroach's point of view? How does archy see the cat, for example? What other details show what the world is like to archy?

archy also has the ability to speak with other animals. In the following selection, he is talking to a toad named warty bliggens.

> (For selection, see p. 21 beginning with "i met a toad the other day. . ." and ending with ". . .of the human cerebrum archy")

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Can you define:
   a. cosmos
   b. blasphemy
   c. impute
   d. complacently
   e. cerebrum

2. This is a conversation between warty and archy. Can you always determine who the speaker is? How?

3. What is warty's view of himself? Is archy's view of warty the same? How does it differ? What point is the author making in archy's comment?

4. What does archy's last statement mean? Is warty bliggens a single unique character, or is he typical of a great many people?

5. What level of language does archy use? Would you expect a cockroach to use this level of language? What effect does the author achieve by making archy talk as he does?

6. What could you add to make this selection easier to read? Why didn't the author add it, do you suppose?

EXERCISE

You have seen that the author has not followed the conventional form in writing that is generally used to make the progress of ideas clear to the reader. Has he done anything to keep the reader from being completely confused? Would it make any difference how the words are arranged in lines? Read the following few lines and compare them with the third verse of warty bliggens.

a little more conversation
revealed that warty
bliggens considers
himself to be the center of
the said universe the earth
exists to grow toadstools for
him to sit under the sun to
give him light by day and
the moon and wheeling
constellations to
make beautiful the
night for the sake of warty
bliggens

Which grouping is easier to read? How does the grouping of words on a line help you to follow the idea?

Here is another selection by archy:

(For selection, see pp. 56-57 beginning with "a lightning bug got. . ." and ending with ". . .the cat ate him archy")

1. Can you always tell who is speaking?

2. Why was the bug called broadway? Why did he liken himself to the Statue of Liberty?

3. Did archy like the bug? What lines support your answer?

4. Is the level of the language the same all the way through? If not, where is it different?

5. What is archy saying in the last six lines?

6. What do the last two and a half lines add to the selection?

The following selection from Gulliver's Travels by Jonathan Swift is another use of an unusual point of view to make a statement about our world. Swift uses a technique called satire to make his point. Satire is humor with a cutting edge. Its intention is not just to create laughter but to point out weaknesses or defects. Gulliver is a ship's captain who was shipwrecked on an island inhabited solely by very tiny people, the Lilliputians. To them he is a giant. The Lilliputians represent people who, because of their pettiness and spite, have shrunk in relation to those around them who are good-hearted and humane. Gulliver was captured by them, bound, and is having his pockets inventoried for their king.

...In the right coat-pocket of the Great Man-Mountain after the strictest search, we found only one great piece of coarse cloth, large enough to be a foot-cloth for your Majesty's chief room of state.... There were two pockets which we could not enter: these he called his fobs; they were two large slits cut into the top of his middle Cover /breeches/, but squeezed close by the pressure of his belly. Out of the right fob hung a great silver chain, with a wonderful kind of engine at the bottom. We directed him to draw out whatever was fastened to that chain; which appeared to be a globe, half silver, and half of some transparent metal; for, on the transparent side, we saw certain strange figures circularly drawn, and thought we could touch them, till we found our fingers stopped by that lucid substance. He put this engine to our ears, which made an incessant noise like that of a water-mill. And we conjecture it is either some unknown animal, or the god that he worships; but we are more inclined to the latter opinion, because he assured us (if we understood him right, for he expressed himself very imperfectly), that he seldom did anything without consulting it. He called it his oracle, and said it pointed out the time for every action of his life.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Certain of the words may be unfamiliar to you. A fob is a small pocket in men's trousers for a watch. A water-mill is a mill whose machinery is moved by water.
   What do the words conjecture and oracle mean?

2. What actually was the cloth they found? Why would the Lilliputians think the cloth was coarse? What would a foot-cloth be?

3. What was the strange engine? What was the transparent metal? What were the strange figures? the incessant noise? What does Gulliver mean when he describes the instrument as an oracle?

4. What does time mean in the last sentence? Has the word more than one meaning as it is used here?

5. How true is the statement "he seldom did anything without consulting it"? Were the Lilliputians merely describing the last item they had found, or were they commenting on human actions? If so, what comments were they making?

ASSIGNMENT FOR WRITING

In the first paper you wrote in this unit, you chose an object and imagined how it might see the world, or itself. In this assignment you may try a more complicated description that enables you to comment on human nature. Select again a non-human object or creature and write from its point of view as you imagine it. You may use an insect or animal, or an object like a tree, or "non-human" people like the Lilliputians--or possibly a visitor from another planet. In making your comment on human nature, you may talk about a single creature typical of human nature like Warty Bliggens, or you may talk about an object like Gulliver's watch that reveals something about people. You will need to select your details carefully, and keep in mind the size and position of objects you mention. As you did before, check your first draft for mechanical errors and revise any sentences that are not clear. Perhaps you will have time to read some of the papers aloud and talk about them.